

## Health Care Reform: At What Cost?

Yesterday, President Obama signed into law the massive health care overhaul legislation that passed the U.S. House late Sunday evening. Yes, this was historic, but that doesn't make the legislation good or the right thing for the American people. I believe this legislation will be talked about for generations to come as one of the biggest disasters of our time, and our children and grandchildren will be stuck cleaning up the mess.

As I travel across the district, I see and hear about all the struggles and challenges so many are facing. We can't handle any more burdens like new taxes, and I can't think of anyone who wants more government intrusion in their life. That's why I stood up for East Tennessee by voting 'no' on this bad bill that will place more burdens on folks in East Tennessee and around the country.

There are things this Congress could do quickly and easily to cover millions of Americans with health insurance without a risky overhaul of the entire system — allow parents to keep children on their plan until they are age 26, and sign folks up who are already eligible for programs such as SCHIP, Medicaid and Medicare. These two actions alone would have the effect of covering millions of people — with no dramatic expansion of government and no new taxes.

Last week, the President cited an Ohio woman as an example of why we need his brand of health reform. His pitch was emotional, saying the woman had a serious illness and could not afford health care coverage. He said that she had nowhere to turn and that our system had left her with no options. After looking deeper, reporters found that the woman championed as the Obama administration's emblem for health care reform, actually qualified for Medicaid. If we could educate folks about these programs they may qualify for, more Americans could have immediate coverage.

To lower costs in the health care system, we need to enact meaningful tort reform, which was not included anywhere in this legislation. In order to eliminate the issue of pre-existing conditions, I would expand and fund high-risk pools and allow folks to purchase their insurance across state lines. This will create market competition, lower the cost of health care for individuals and businesses, and ensure coverage for individuals with a pre-existing condition.

So now we have a bill enacted into law that will implement an extraordinary amount of new taxes within the first year with no benefits to come for several years. Some even warn that a wave of consolidation is likely, and so are higher premiums as insurers absorb the cost of new benefits and new restrictions. These are the very warnings I have been sharing with this Congress since I got here.

In the Washington world of budget gimmicks, the Democratic Majority offset the high cost of this health care bill by inserting legislation to have the government completely take over the student loan program from the private sector. This will cut over 30,000 jobs in the private student loan sector. I think eliminating a private industry is the wrong solution, but what really gets me mad is they are not doing this in order to help students. The Federal government will pay for its health care bill off the backs of students by charging them 6.8 percent interest rate that only costs 2.8 percent to originate. This is another massive government takeover, and it's not right to require working students to pay for a government-run health care system.

All the Republicans in the House along with 34 Democrats who opposed this bill aren't the only ones frustrated with the unconstitutional mandates found in this bill. Today, the News Sentinel reported that Tennessee Attorney General Bob Cooper has instructed his staff to analyze the federal health care legislation signed into law and will decide whether to file a lawsuit after "careful deliberation" and a "determination that litigation is proper, prudent and timely." There is now legislation up for a vote today in a state House subcommittee that also calls for the attorney general to take legal action against the health care reform legislation. Tennessee is not alone; 36 other states are looking to do the same thing.

Furthermore, I am greatly disappointed that Michigan Congressman Bart Stupak rejected his own amendment that came to the House floor for a vote, which denies the use of federal funds for abortions. Instead, Stupak cut a "deal" with the President rather than holding firm on this issue of protecting the unborn in this bill.

I conclude with encouragement to folks of East Tennessee. Even though this bill will likely be made law, I will continue to

fight for you &ndash; to strip out the bad in this bill, while implementing good policy for Americans. I will not give up the fight, and I ask that you stand with me and do the same.